



RMC Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: January 23, 2023

Time: 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Type: Zoom Teleconference

Participants: Legislative Committee Co-chair Lindsay Thompson, Bill Valentine, Susan O'Neill, Susanne Richards, Senator Mike McKay, Don Mulrine, Kurt Fuchs, Gregory Padgham, John Hartline, Dawson Hunter, Scott Warner, Beth Hill, Janice Palmer, Josh Hastings, Debbie Bowden, Monique Snyder, Kelly Dudeck, Diana-Lynne Hsu, Bill Christopher, Matt Tefteau, Steve McHenry, Charlotte Davis, Amanda Clevenger, Megan D'Arcy

Legislative Committee Co-chair Lindsay Thompson welcomed everyone and convened the meeting at 2:03pm. Co-chair Thompson asked Committee members to review the January 9, 2023 meeting minutes. **John Hartline made the motion to accept the minutes and Bill Valentine seconded the motion. The January 9, 2023 minutes were unanimously accepted.** Ms. Charlotte Davis informed the Committee that Governor Moore fully funded the RMC under the MDA budget in the amount a little over \$9 million and approximately \$118,000 for MAERDAF. Ms. Davis stated that she was very pleased for RMC to receive the funding and for members to thank Governor Moore. She will be signing up for both budget hearings that will take place on February 17 and 20, 2023. Co-chair Thompson stated that overall the agricultural programs she follows look good in the budget and include MARBIDCO and Program Open Space. Ms. Davis reported that she did not find any broadband funding and she is making inquiries as they anticipated federal funding from the Broadband, Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) program.

The Committee reviewed the bill tracking list and Co-chair Thompson explained the bill review protocol for the Committee. The following bills were discussed:

- SB0181/HB0200: Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2024) – Sponsored by The President and The Speaker (By Request – Administration). Committee Recommendation: **Support**
- SB0034: Department of Agriculture – State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Co-Chair Thompson explained that this was a specific person to work with value added producers to help navigate the regulatory way of things and stems from the meat processing production. Mr. Matt Tefteau recommended that Charlotte Davis testify in person. Committee Recommendation: **Support**
- SB0059/HB0107: Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Employers – Special Enrollment Period and Marketing. Committee Recommendation: **Monitor**
- SB0081: Labor and Employment – State Minimum Wage Rate – Acceleration (Fight for Fifteen Acceleration Act of 2023). Co-chair Thompson stated that this bill accelerates the previous timeline to \$15 and specific to certain size employers. It was unclear if there is an exemption for agricultural workers and Ms. Thompson will investigate. Committee Recommendation: **Monitor**
- SB0094: Income Tax – Subtraction Modification – Volunteer Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services. Ms. Charlotte Davis stated that the Committee has supported this in the past and this is expanding the subtraction modification from \$7,000 to \$10,000 and a letter will be drafted to the Chair since the hearing passed. Committee Recommendation: **Support, Letter to the Chair**
- SB0103: Income Tax – Maryland Residential Solar Investment Tax Credit. Sponsored by Senator Ellis. Committee Recommendation: **Monitor**

- SBO121: More Opportunities for Career – Focused Students Act of 2023. Requires the local departments of education to prioritize for the purpose of guidance counseling and apprenticeship for students not looking to go to college. Committee Recommendation: **Support, Letter to the Chair**
- SBO124/HBO032: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. Mr. Steve McHenry provided background on the bill and stated that the purpose is to continue the Council under the Department of Emergency Management. Committee Recommendation: **Support**
- HBO011: Private Well Safety Act of 2023. Committee Recommendation: **Monitor**
- HBO063: Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program – Establishment. Mr. Steve McHenry stated this bill would enable invasive species in the Bay to also qualify for the certified farm enterprise program with the target being the invasive blue catfish. Committee Recommendation: **Support**
- HBO152: Department of Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Grant Fund. The Committee discussed that the urban producers do not feel like it's enough money at \$250,000. The Committee discussed that they heard that MDA is supporting this bill with amendment to change the composition of the Review Board. They also discussed that the funding can be doubled in this climate. Committee Recommendation: **Support with Amendment to align with MDA**

Co-chair Ms. Lindsay Thompson asked if there were any bills that the Committee would like to discuss. The Committee discussed SBO158 – Pesticide Registration – PFAS Testing – Requirements. The Committee did not make a recommendation on this bill.

Ms. Charlotte Davis provided an update on the Rural Communities Improvement Act of 2023 and stated that the Council has been seeking private sponsors but it appears that MDA will take it over. She spoke to the drafter and it was submitted before the deadline and they have an LR. Ms. Davis further reported on the status of the State Coordinating Committee on Health and Human Services Transportation Update that stems from the Non-Emergency Health Transportation roundtables that took place in the Fall. Ms. Davis stated that Senator Ellis will sponsor the bill on the Senate side and Ken Kerr on the House side, but they are waiting on the LR until it's clear if the bill will go to Environment & Transportation or Health & Government Operations. Ms. Davis further reported that Senator Elfreth asked Ms. Davis to draft information on Broadband and the Office of Digital Equity and Inclusion and the draft includes a rural municipal pilot program. This draft was also sent to Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes.

The Committee discussed possible upcoming changes in Agency positions and the status of incoming legislative liaisons.

Co-chair Thompson reviewed the upcoming RMC events which included the Legislative Lunch, on Friday, January 27, 2023; Rural Maryland Day on Thursday, February 9, 2023; and Maryland Day on Friday, March 24, 2023.

Co-chair Lindsay Thompson ended at 2:38pm.